

REMARKS FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The Nineteenth Commencement

Benjamin Brenneman

June 14, 2019

Good evening! I would like to welcome everyone here for an awesome event to celebrate an awesome group of young men and women sitting before us today. First, I want to thank everybody who helped make this ceremony possible. This includes MJ Law for providing our stage, sound and lighting; The Sherman Theatre for providing our floor seating; Pepsi Company for their beverage donations; John Koretski and Hasana Parham and Amalia Aguilar for serving as senior class advisors throughout this school year; Lynette Grimaldi, Francine McGrath and our entire secretarial staff for the preparation of programs and diplomas; our music department for their continued outstanding performances; our custodial, maintenance, security and technology departments; my phenomenal administrative team made up of Mr. Fuller, Ms. Stevens, and Mr. DeLong; our teachers and our staff for their tireless efforts in supporting our students. Next, I would like to thank Sean Edwards and his crew of workers for their organization of behind the scenes legwork for tonight. Lastly, I would like to thank our school Board of Education and our central office personnel for their support allowing us to all be here this evening. Our school community is so fortunate to be surrounded by such great people dedicated to celebrating our students who make up the graduating class of 2019. Please join me in a round of applause for all these people.

And now, my message to the graduates. Over the past several weeks, I have reminded you each and every day leaving up to this moment to enjoy your time. I told you it would be here before you know it, and you would only get to graduate from high school once in your life. Well, today is your day! You have earned the right to be here, and for that, I could not be more proud of each and every one of you.

I have three important takeaways that I would like to share with you. First, my hope for each of you is that you will live a long and prosperous life well into your eighties and nineties. Let's say that's the case, then you haven't even lived 25% of your life at this point. Because of that, I want to remind you all to allow your foundation of being an East Stroudsburg North Timberwolf to drive you in making this world a better place. This year, more than any other graduating class, you have truly learned what being a T-wolf means (thank you Mr. Fuller). If you live a life where you show tolerance to other people, make wise choices in all that you do no matter how easy or how hard it may seem, take ownership for all of your actions, serve others through leadership and show kindness to others through friendship, I have no doubt that you will make this world a better place.

Second, be excited about the possibilities that lie ahead... the known and the unknown. The planned and the spontaneous. I want each of you to find your happiness along your journey. Allow yourself to learn and grow each and every day, and that even includes the days you don't feel motivated. A few weeks ago, I read a quote from Ben Askren, former two-time NCAA national champion wrestler and current professional athlete, where he said, "Challenge doesn't mean you say 'yes' when you know you're going to win. Challenge means you say 'yes' no

matter what.” When you are willing to challenge yourself, you’re also learning to face your fears. Whether you achieve or you come up short, your success will be recognized through the process. And when you challenge yourself often, you will soon learn that on the other side of fear will be your sense of freedom. And with that freedom, I promise you will find your happiness.

Third is a message I learned from a friend who passed away at the young age of forty-two years old in June of 2012. In the short time I knew him, he taught me and many others two valuable life lessons: smile and be nice to others. I ask you to allow your smile to be infectious and know that it does carry the power to make others feel better about themselves. And choose to be nice to others, even if they choose a different path. Your decision to be nice to others will leave a far better mark on this world than any other choice you make.

I would like to end by thanking every parent, guardian, family member and friend in the audience who have supported these amazing young men and women who are graduating today. I would like to thank every faculty and staff member and all administrators who show up to work at High School North and within our district each day to support our students, encouraging them to be the positive change we want to see in this world.

And I will end with a message that I’ve learned from this year’s musical performance, *The Wiz*: “Hello world, I would like to introduce you to East Stroudsburg High School North’s graduating class of 2019.” Thank you!